

# **EXHIBIT 13**

# United Nations General Assembly: Informal Meeting of the Plenary to Hear a Briefing on UNRWA

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Ministry Statements & Speeches: 6 March 2024

Statement delivered by Permanent Representative, H.E. Ms. Carolyn Schwalger

Mr. President,

For 75 years UNRWA has fulfilled a critical role in the region working to meet the humanitarian and development needs of Palestinian refugees.

Ongoing support for UNRWA's mandate from across the UN membership, including New Zealand, has reaffirmed this.

The allegations that a small number of UNRWA staff were involved in Hamas' appalling 7 October terror attacks on Israel are very serious and deeply concerning.

It is important these allegations are investigated thoroughly, that safeguards are put in place to guard against a recurrence, and that appropriate action is taken.

We have seen swift action from the Secretary General, UNRWA and the wider UN system in response.

We urge the full cooperation of all the parties, including Israel, for a timely and successful investigation process.

New Zealand has not paused funding for UNRWA. Our planned contribution is due by mid-year and we will be looking for assurances as to the robustness and integrity of the investigation process in advance of that payment.

Acute funding constraints are of course not the only challenge UNRWA is facing in Gaza. UNRWA, and other humanitarian actors, must have safe and unimpeded access to reach civilians in need.

We recall the requirement for all parties to comply with the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice on 26 January, including to take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of basic services and humanitarian assistance to Palestinians in Gaza.

New Zealand is also concerned about attempts to discredit the Agency, including through disinformation.

Given the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza, and the millions of refugees receiving protection and assistance from UNRWA around the region, it is essential that the agency is effective and can deliver.

There is also work to be done on the part of UNRWA to ensure it can continue to deliver in line with UN values and humanitarian principles. We acknowledge UNRWA has made this an ongoing priority.

New Zealand continues to support the UN's investigation and the external review led by Catherine Colonna, these are crucial to addressing the allegations appropriately and restoring confidence in UNRWA – a vital lifeline in this devastating conflict.

Thank you.

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